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ABSTRACT

This report presents highlights of a 1998 forum that examined why teen pregnancy is an education priority, the impact of teen pregnancy on student success in school, promising school approaches to teen pregnancy prevention, and what help schools need to become more effective partners in preventing teen pregnancy. Recommendations by forum participants are presented in the areas of developing cognitive and creative competencies (e.g., set high standards for all students and align curriculum frameworks and assessments); developing career and vocational competencies; developing health and physical competencies (e.g., incorporate comprehensive health education into state and local standards and assessments); developing personal and social competence (e.g., promote family and community involvement and incorporate standards for character education as part of the school curriculum and environment); and developing citizenship competencies (providing civics education and service learning experiences). Cross-cutting recommendations include developing a shared vision for education at the state and district levels and supporting promising, evidence-based policies and programs. (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

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A CALL TO ACTION:

What Schools Can Do to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Promote Student Achievement

Proceedings from A National Forum for Representatives of State and Local Boards of Education

December 9-10, 1998 / Washington, DC

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NASBE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION

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The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) is a non-profit, private association with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status that represents state and territorial boards of education. These boards are responsible for the educational interests of more than 50 million students in public schools and more than three million students in post-secondary institutions.

While the scope of board responsibility is defined differently in every state, there are some common areas of jurisdiction. These include: setting statewide curriculum standards; determining qualifications for professional education personnel, making recommendations on state education statutes, adopting standards to assure equal access and due process; undertaking quasi-legislative and judicial functions; administering federal assistance programs; and formulating standards on school facilities.

NASBE's principal objectives include strengthening state leadership in educational policymaking; promoting excellence in the education of all students; advocating equality of access to educational opportunity; and assuring continued citizen support for public education. The association serves over 700 individuals, including members of state boards, state board attorneys and state board executive secretaries. As the single organization representing state boards nationwide, we seek to further our goals through the provision of high quality services in the following areas: training and technical assistance to members and the larger education community; sponsoring regional and national conferences on critical policy issues; publishing resource materials tailored to policymakers' needs; and communicating with the Congress, federal executive agencies, business and industry, national associations and other state decision-makers, including chief state school officers, state legislators and governors.

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The National School Boards Association (NSBA) is the nationwide organization representing public school governance. NSBA's mission is to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education through school board leadership. NSBA achieves its mission by representing the school board perspective before federal government agencies and with national organizations that affect education and by providing vital information and services to state associations of school boards and local school boards throughout the nation.

NSBA advocates local school boards as the ultimate expression of grassroots democracy. The organization supports the capacity of each school board—acting on behalf of and in close concert with the people of its community—to envision the future of education in its community; to establish a structure and an environment that allow all students to reach their maximum potential; to provide accountability for the people of its community on performance in the schools; and to serve as the key community advocate for children, youth and their public schools.

Founded in 1940, NSBA is a not-for-profit federation of associations of school boards across the United States and its territories. NSBA represents the nation's 95,000 school board members that govern 14,800 local school districts serving the nation's more than 47 million public school students. Virtually all school board members are elected, and the rest are appointed by elected officials.

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Dear Education Leader:

There is good news, more good news and sobering news. The good news is that the birth rate among young women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen in the United States has steadily declined over the last ten years. More good news reveals that girls who have successful school experiences—academically, athletically and socially—postpone sexual activity and childbirth until after their completion of high school. In short, education works and makes a difference in the lives of young women. But there is sobering news as well. The United States continues to have a significantly higher birth rate among teens than other industrialized nations, nations that we are regularly compared to in international educational assessments. And of even greater concern is that the highest incidences of teen pregnancy continue to occur among the poor and young women of color, the fastest growing segment of our population.

"You hear, 'children are the future.' That's wrong. We are their future...What we do and put together today is going to totally impact whether they have a future or not."

Sharon Rodine, Project Director, Healthy, Empowered and Responsible Teens of Oklahoma City (HEART of OKC)

More than half a million children are born to teenage mothers each year. These children often struggle in school because of health and economic factors, as well as their parents' difficulties in participating fully in their learning experiences. Meanwhile, teenage parents themselves often face challenges balancing their own schoolwork with parenting and job responsibilities. State and local policy leaders are raising academic expectations, which is an important goal. At the same time, they must continue to raise young people's knowledge about the consequences of too-early sexual activity and strengthen opportunities for all young people to reach their full potential.

The National Association of State Boards of Education and the National School Boards Association have partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to keep policymakers informed of the best and most up-to-date research on preventing teen pregnancies, especially the role that schools can play to forestall early parenthood. Through forums such as the one described in this publication, we convey our commitment to building on the progress of the last ten years to break the cycle of teen pregnancies that hampers the success of children and families alike.

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Introduction

Together with families and communities, schools can foster the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes that provide protection against the behaviors that put young people at risk of academic failure and poor social, health and economic outcomes. For education policymakers in particular, this means examining how to:

- Improve student achievement;
- Furnish students with opportunities to develop skills they will use for a lifetime;
- Promote the healthy development of all students;
- Provide links to both academic- and health-related support services; and
- Promote a school environment that makes students feel connected to adults in the school building and community.

What Do We Know About Teen Pregnancy?

Although the rates are declining slightly, the United States has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and births in the western industrialized world (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1998, *Teen Pregnancy: Key Statistics*).

- Nearly one million girls get pregnant each year in the United States.
- More than four out of ten young women become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20;
- Teen mothers tend to have mothers or older sisters who gave birth as adolescents and are more likely to have been sexually abused (especially younger teen mothers) (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994);
- About a half-million teen pregnancies end in a birth, while others result in miscarriage or abortion; very few teens choose adoption;
- Eight in ten of teen pregnancies are unintended;
- Nearly 80 percent of teen pregnancies occur among unmarried teens; and
- Teen pregnancy costs the United States an estimated $7 billion annually (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1998, *Teen Pregnancy: Key Statistics*).

There Is Good News

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Office of Human Service Policy, from 1991 through 1997, for teens of most races (white, black, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics) ages 15-19, the teen birth rate has declined 15 percent. Data reported for 1998 reveal an additional reduction of 3 percent.

In general, sexual activity among younger teens has decreased, and condom use has increased.

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The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) raised these issues at their December 1998 invitational forum entitled, *What Can We Do to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Promote Student Achievement? A National Forum for Representatives of State and Local Boards of Education.* The forum provided the 72 participants from over 40 states the opportunity to learn about the status of teen pregnancy in the United States and its relationship to student success in school and in life. They learned about promising school policy and program approaches that have been shown to foster student success and prevent teen pregnancy.

The questions posed at the forum were:

1. Why is teen pregnancy an education priority?
2. What is the impact of teen pregnancy on student success in school?
3. What are promising school approaches to teen pregnancy prevention?
4. What can we do to help schools become more effective partners in preventing teen pregnancy?

This report presents highlights of the forum, comments from the teens who spoke with participants and policy recommendations from the state and local education policymakers who participated in the two-day meeting. It is intended to serve as a source of information and a call to action.

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Why is Teen Pregnancy an Education Priority?

Debate about the role of schools in preventing teen pregnancy persists at the national, state and local levels. While the role of schools in the cognitive development of children and young people is readily accepted, schools also play an essential role in their students' social, emotional and physical development. Schools are a critical link to addressing and preventing risk behaviors identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as the main causes of premature morbidity and mortality in the United States (see Box below). Indeed, the nation's public schools serve approximately 50 million children and youth for 13 developmentally critical years—the same years during which these risk behaviors often are established. Moreover, many of these behaviors also have a negative impact on students' abilities to function effectively in school and, thus, on academic and social achievement.

There is general agreement that parents or other family members have the primary responsibility of teaching children about sexuality, safety and health and prevention of alcohol and other drug use. While this is true, schools are increasingly being asked to teach, advise and counsel on these matters. This shift goes in tandem with the changing dynamics of, and demands on parents and families today.

Schools foster academic success, personal connectedness and self-worth. Research has shown that children and young people who do well in school and have strong, positive connections with family and school personnel are better able to avoid sexual pressures, alcohol and other drug abuse as well as other risky situations. Thus, schools can help prevent teen pregnancy and its negative outcomes and help shape and mold young people's lives so adulthood can be successful and fulfilling.

CDC's Six Priority Risk Behaviors

- Intentional and unintentional injuries
- Sexual behaviors that lead to HIV, STDs and teen pregnancy
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Tobacco use
- Physical inactivity
- Unhealthy eating habits

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What is the Impact of Teen Pregnancy on Student Success in School?

> Adolescent pregnancy and parenting have a significant impact on the health and education of young people and on their social and economic lives. "While 94 percent of teens believe that if they were involved in a pregnancy, they would stay in school, less than one-third of young women who become mothers before the age of 18 will complete high school. [This] makes teen parenthood the leading cause of dropping out of high school among young women" [The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1998, *While Adults are Arguing, the Teens are Getting Pregnant*]. Additionally, many young women who give birth have already dropped out of school, putting their futures and those of their children in serious jeopardy.

While there is an emerging consensus that males must be included in efforts to prevent teen pregnancy, there is less information about the young men who father children. The issue is complicated by the fact that some of the fathers are out of school or past school age.

Among the things that are known are:

- There is a strong possibility that an adolescent mother will choose a partner two to three years older than she is. Approximately 40 percent of the males who represent the "other half" of teen pregnancies are 20 years old or older.
- An estimated 14 percent of high school-aged males report causing at least one pregnancy; and
- Older men involved in a teen pregnancy are less likely to have completed high school and are more likely to be unemployed [The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1997.]

Young women who become parents have many educational experiences in common. They tend to:

- Have difficulties with school work;
- Have high rates of school absenteeism;
- Participate in few after-school and extracurricular activities;
- Have low expectations for their futures;
- Attend college less often than their non-parenting counterparts; and
- Live in communities with high residential turnover, high poverty rates, low levels of educational attainment and high rates of single parenthood.

The cycle of poor educational outcomes, deprivation and poverty does not stop with the teen parent—children of adolescents are at a disadvantage as well. They experience low educational achievement [less than or equal to a high school diploma, and 50 percent are likely to repeat a grade]; financial dependence on public support; and many will go on to become teen parents themselves. According to researcher Douglas Kirby, babies born to 15 to 17 year-old teens generally have less supportive and stimulating home environments, poorer health, lower cognitive development...and higher rates of behavior problems than children of women ages 20 years or older [Kirby, D., 1997].

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In short, the threat of teen pregnancy is a major risk factor experienced by young adults, and the connection between teen pregnancy and academic achievement cannot be ignored. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy's publication *While Adults are Arguing, the Teens are Getting Pregnant*, states, "If you don't postpone having children until you graduate from high school and are beyond the teen years, the odds are high that your family will struggle with economic deprivation and uncertainty—even if you marry and manage to find work."

What Actions Do Schools Need to Take to Prevent Teen Pregnancy?

A first step is to reach teens before the onset of sexual activity. Dr. Gerald Tirozzi, former U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, said, "In the next 10 years, we predict a 10 percent increase in enrollment, particularly among middle and high schools—the very population that teen pregnancy affects. Unless or until we put programs in place to address these issues, we're going to have dramatically negative educational [and health] outcomes at the end."

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What are Promising School Approaches to Teen Pregnancy Prevention?

Research has documented that there are no easy answers to preventing or delaying the onset of the behaviors that lead to adolescent pregnancy. One thing that is clear, however, is that schools "... need to begin at the beginning, by helping their youngest students succeed ...; carve out career paths and plans for themselves; and hold onto dreams for their futures ... Boys and girls who have high educational aspirations, better than average grades and a sense of self-worth and control are far more likely to take precautions to avoid pregnancy ..." (Symons, C.W., et al., 1997). In short, programs and activities that support student success and resiliency are part of the answer to teen pregnancy prevention.

School board members, parents, teachers and other adult role models need to help young people, "...develop cognitive skills; establish personal limits, boundaries and short- and long-term goals; and build relationships so they can hopefully emerge as productive...[resilient] young adults," noted forum speaker Dr. Joyce Fetro, Associate Professor of Health Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Despite the presence of promising youth resiliency programs, however, "a substantial number of American youth are at risk of reaching adulthood unable to adequately meet the requirements of the workplace; have committed relationships with families and friends; and assume responsibility of participating in tomorrow's world," said Dr. Fetro. What may be needed is a new approach—inclusion of youth development theory and practice with the integration of community partnerships into prevention activities.

What is Youth Development?

Youth development means creating resilient children and youth. It is not about youth who are problem-free, but about young people who are fully prepared (Pittman, K.J. and Cahill, M., 1992).

Attention must be placed on the, "... qualities in children and youth, who ... despite exposure to significant stress and adversity, do not succumb to school failure, substance abuse and mental health and juvenile delinquency problems ...," (Benard, B., 1991) said Dr. Fetro. All young people are naturally resilient, but if they do not have support, they lose their elasticity. Children need to learn how to stretch and bounce back, and as they stretch, they become stronger.

Available data suggest that youth development strategies enhance children's abilities to bounce back—to be more resilient. At the core of youth development are three categories of basic needs and five competencies (Pittman, K.J., 1997). In order to become productive adults, young people need to have a feeling and a sense of:

- ***Connection:*** Safety and structure, closeness within relationships, belonging and group membership;
- ***Confidence:*** Self-worth, ability to contribute, independence and control over one's life; and
- ***Character:*** Competence, mastery and self-awareness.

Young people meet these needs either positively or negatively. An educator's job is to foster development of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors that lead to positive results. Children and youth need to develop:

- **Cognitive/Creative Competence:** A broad knowledge base and an ability to appreciate and demonstrate creative expression; good oral/written language skills, problem solving and analytic skills; an ability to learn; and an interest in learning and achieving.

- **Career/Vocational Competence:** A broad understanding and awareness of life options and knowledge of concrete steps to realize choices; adequate preparation for a chosen career/vocation and family life; and understanding the value and purpose of family, work and leisure.
- **Health/Physical Competence:** Good current health status and evidence of appropriate knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors that will assure future health and well being.
- **Personal/Social Competence:** Intrapersonal skills (ability to understand emotions and practice self-discipline); interpersonal skills (ability to work with others, develop friendships and relationships through communication, cooperation, empathizing and negotiating); coping system skills (ability to adapt, be flexible and assume responsibility); judgment skills (ability to plan, evaluate, make decisions and solve problems).

What is needed to prevent teen pregnancy?

"If we're concerned about a child falling down the stairs, do we stand at the bottom to catch them, comfort them and fix whatever is broken? Or do we put a gate at the top? We've been dealing with issues like teen pregnancy, drug abuse and [other risk factors] by catching them at the bottom, and we need to start building a gate at the top."

Dr. Joyce Fetro, Associate Professor of Health Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

- **Citizenship Competence:** Understanding the history, challenges and values of the nation, community and culture; respect for different communities and cultures represented within the nation; and a desire and commitment to be involved in efforts that contribute to a broader good.

As those intimately involved in formulating educational goals and objectives, and ultimately, in shaping the lives of children and youth, it is critical that policymakers understand the importance of the role that schools play in meeting developmental needs and fostering development of competencies that will help students avoid behaviors that compromise academic achievement and lead to a successful transition into adulthood. By doing so, behaviors such as sexual activity that lead to teen pregnancy can potentially be reduced.

Innovative Models of Community Coalitions In-Action

Promising youth development approaches require school/community partnerships—partnerships at the state and local levels designed to support children and young people so they can more effectively face challenges that put them at risk of injury, illness, academic failure and teen pregnancy. Throughout the forum, participants learned that the teen pregnancy programs showing the most promise are those that foster youth development within a community partnership framework.

Forum speaker Dr. Cathy Melvin of the Division of Reproductive Health at the CDC confirmed that the most effective partnership programs, "...include a wide variety of strategies—information giving; group support for teens; and a wide range of service provision, [including] health, social and educational mentoring services—the kinds of services that help teens navigate through this period of their lives." Promising teen pregnancy prevention community coalitions include:

- **Schools as Key Members:** Schools have an essential role in influencing children and youth behaviors. They are in a position to establish strong linkages with prevention coalitions to create relationships that can enhance the healthy development of all children and young

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people. State and local pregnancy prevention coalitions can provide support to school boards by helping educate members on adolescent pregnancy and proven pregnancy prevention programining. Likewise, school boards can advocate for the passage of resolutions supporting comprehensive sexuality education; pregnancy prevention programming; teacher training on sexuality education; and school-based services for teenage parents.

- **Long-Reaching, Comprehensive Goals and Objectives, Attained Through Leadership Consensus:** Advocates can work together on common goals such as:
  - Reducing the occurrence of teen pregnancy;
  - Supporting goals and objectives dedicated to protecting youth resiliency so positive adulthood can be achieved;
  - Encouraging the involvement of boys and young men; and
  - Initiating programs that incorporate long-term prevention strategies.
- **Leaders Who are Well-Informed:** Leaders must learn about all facets of teen pregnancy—resiliency and risk factors; target audiences; and a community's assets, norms and expectations. They must keep well informed and up-to-date on statistics and strategies; assume strong, clear leadership roles; and reach out to new partners.
- **Development and Implementation of Evidence-Based Activities:** There is much debate about what are considered "promising" teen pregnancy prevention strategies. What is clear is that activities must have evaluation components within them so data can be collected, extrapolated and disseminated. We need to ask, "What are the facts, and what remains questionable?" In short, curricula and programs must be evidence-based, similar to math, science and reading curricula.

A study completed by Michael D. Resnick, Ph.D. and his associates identified risk and protective factors at the family, school and individual levels as they relate to emotional health, violence, substance abuse, sexual behaviors and other risk factors.

"...Results indicated that parent-family and perceived school connectedness were protective against nearly every health.risk behavior measure... [and that] the family and school contexts are among the most critical."

(Resnick, M.D., et al., 1997)

- **Youth Involvement as Part of the Solution:** Giving youth and young people specific and important roles in project development and implementation is critical to the success of teen pregnancy prevention programs. Their input ensures that messages, products and methods remain relevant to the target audience.

The forum provided participants with a range of program examples that effectively integrated these factors. Speakers presented various models for school involvement on the theme of combining youth development, community partnerships and teen pregnancy prevention programming. While target audience and programmatic emphasis varied from program-to-program, the sessions provided participants with an opportunity to experience promising programs first-hand; integrate concepts and theories into programmatic frameworks; and take home those elements that might be applicable in their own communities.

The most striking feature of these examples was that while teen pregnancy prevention was considered a major goal, it was also presented as one of many positive outcomes, including strengthening parent-child communication and developing a sense of shared responsibility

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What Can We Do to Help Schools Become More Effective Partners in Preventing Teen Pregnancy?

Participants met in a series of small groups to reflect on the information gathered throughout the forum and to consider the implications for schools and their role as state and local education policymakers. As part of their deliberations, participants developed a wide array of policy recommendations to help schools become effective partners in teen pregnancy prevention efforts while continuing their role as institutions of learning. Not surprisingly, most of their recommendations can be grouped according to the five competencies described in the youth development model. These elements are essential to help children and youth develop the character traits and the sense of confidence and connectedness that will help them succeed in school and avoid the behaviors that could compromise their current and future health and achievement.

The following is a summary of key recommendations made by forum participants. They are listed under the corresponding competency that each recommendation is primarily designed to address. Cross-cutting recommendations are listed separately.

1. Recommendations that Support the Development of Cognitive and Creative Competencies

▫ **Set High Standards for All Students:** Members of state and local boards of education agree that the education community can play a significant role in reducing teenage pregnancies by providing all students with the opportunity to reach high standards of learning and linking their academic instruction to their plans for the future. Setting high academic standards in reading, writing, math and science, as well as in health education and the fine arts, provide students challenging opportunities for them to excel. Therefore, state and local boards of education must adopt policies that clearly articulate educational goals and high expectations at the same time they communicate their faith in each student's ability to achieve the standards.

▫ **Align Curriculum Frameworks and Assessments:** One of the best ways to clearly articulate expectations for students is to align curriculum and assessment mechanisms with state standards. This reinforces for everyone in the school and the community what children and youth are expected to achieve in school. Furthermore, meaningful assessments and evaluations must be aligned with the curriculum and standards in each subject area and employ multiple strategies for measuring achievement at different points in time. Measuring student performance is most successful when progress is monitored over time and evaluated using a variety of tools and strategies. Therefore, policymakers must make every effort to align their educational standards,

curriculum and assessments at the state and local levels.

▫ **Review Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Requirements:** Students learn at different rates and use different learning styles. Therefore, teachers need to develop in-depth knowledge of the subject matter they teach, as well as a plethora of skills and tools to help all students learn and achieve high academic standards. Forum participants recommend that state and local boards of education adopt policies requiring that teacher preparation and professional development programs provide instructional staff with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and practices needed to help all students achieve in the subject areas they teach.

In addition, many forum participants expressed a need to review the teacher preparation and certification requirements for middle and high school years. While elementary school teacher training heavily incorporates child development theory and practice, the preparation of middle and high school teachers focuses primarily on instructional subject matter. In other words, middle and high school teachers are primarily trained to teach a subject, not individual students. The challenges and expectations confronting youth today require that middle and high school teachers understand and incorporate youth development theory and practice in order to help students meet high academic standards and develop the competencies and decision-making skills to succeed in school and life. Forum participants recommend that state and local boards of education adopt policies that strengthen, through pre-service and in-service, the capabilities of middle and high school teachers to reflect the developmental needs of students they teach and in their relationships with students.

▫ **Provide Academic Support Services for Students at Risk of Academic Failure:** Research indicates that providing academic support services that include tutoring, peer mentoring and daily contact with a school staff member is essential for helping students at risk of academic failure. Local and state boards of education are strongly encouraged to adopt policies and invest in programs that provide coordinated strategies to help low-performing students. Moreover, local and state boards of education should make a priority the adoption of policies that support the goal of all students learning to read by third grade.

2. Recommendations that Support the Development of Career and Vocational Competencies

▫ **Provide Opportunities for Students to Explore the Wide Array of Vocational and Career Opportunities Available to Them:** Young people who have high hopes for their futures are less likely to become parents during their teenage years. Having a strong sense of hope for the future is among the most important factors for helping students prevent teen pregnancy and parenthood. Helping youth develop an understanding of how schoolwork relates to future plans impels students to perform better

Schools can form partnerships with local agencies and businesses to design ways to make the connection between academics and future

"You can't separate what happens in society and what takes place in the school house."

Dr. Gerald Tirozzi, former U.S. Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education

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work opportunities for students. School-to-work and internship programs can be used as vehicles to engage students in their academic courses, especially non-college bound students. Promising strategies include job shadowing programs, apprenticeships, internships, service learning and part-time work opportunities. All of these approaches give students the opportunity to explore different career paths; develop an understanding of their particular aptitudes and interests; and build the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. State and local boards of education should adopt policies and programs that foster future hopes, career aspirations and related skills among students. To be successful, education policymakers and administrators should ensure that these programs explicitly tie these experiences back to the school curriculum.

3. Recommendations that Support the Development of Health and Physical Competencies

▫ **Incorporate Comprehensive Health Education into State and Local Standards and Assessments:** Research shows that youth need a strong foundation in reading, writing, math and health to safely navigate their adolescent years (Symons, C.W., et al, 1997). With regard to teen pregnancy, youth who receive comprehensive health education in conjunction with a strong academic program are significantly less likely to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors (Symons, C.W., et al, 1997). State and local boards of education should include health education as part of their state/district standards and assessments.

▫ **Facilitate a Coordinated Approach to Health and Mental Health Services:** Improving the health status of children and youth creates optimal learning conditions in schools. Hence, the education community should develop strategies for facilitating access to physical and mental health services. Education policymakers and administrators can join forces with health and social/human services agencies in the community. Collectively these agencies can facilitate access to services needed by students who are uninsured or under-insured.

4. Recommendations that Support the Development of Personal and Social Competencies

▫ **Promote Family and Community Involvement:** State and local boards of education should adopt policies and programs that support family involvement in schools as partners and resources. For example, schools can develop programs that help parents strengthen their skills in dealing with the myriad of issues faced by their children. Also, schools must develop strategies for helping parents understand the material presented in the classroom and jointly

identify effective strategies for reinforcing student learning at home.

▫ **Incorporate Standards for Character Education as Part of the School Curriculum and School Environment:** Historically, three social institutions have shared responsibility for transmitting societal values and developing character: the home, faith organizations (e.g., church, temples, mosques) and schools. At a time when influences outside the family and faith institutions are having a greater impact on children's lives, the role of schools in character education has become more critical. As the nation has become more diverse, the challenge to educators and policy-makers is to convey an appreciation of different traditions or values and guard against indoctrination into a single tradition.

However, regardless of the ever-growing diversity of the nation, Americans believe that we share a common set of core values/virtues and agree that public schools should teach them. This common set of values/virtues include: trustworthiness, respect for self and others, responsibility, fairness/justice, caring/compassion and citizenship. Failure to expose children to a common set of values/virtues such as these, can foster a sense of alienation from society.

▫ **Promote and Support Participation in Extracurricular and After-School Programs for All Students:** Encouraging student involvement in before and after school programs such as athletics, expanded academics, theater, non-competitive sports and arts also helps improve academic performance. These programs should be accessible to all students, particularly to students at risk of dropping out of school. Indeed, research indicates that these students remain engaged in schools precisely because of these programs (Allen, J.P., et al, (1997); Blum, R.W., Rinehart, P.M., (1997); Manlove, J. (1998).

5. Recommendations that Support the Development of Citizenship Competencies

▫ **Provide Civics Education:** As mentioned elsewhere in this report, a sense of connectedness to families, schools and communities is very important in helping students develop a sense of belonging and purpose in life that is critical in helping them achieve in school and avoid the attitudes and behaviors that may compromise their future. As key socializing institutions, schools must help students understand the diversity, values and history of their communities and how these contribute to the democratic foundations and institutions of this nation. Furthermore, understanding their individual and collective relationship to the civic and democratic life can help inspire students' desire to participate in efforts that contribute to the betterment of their communities and the nation.

NASBE/NSBA Teen Panel member:

"[Focus on] activities that support positive peer activities, [including] sports, clubs, hobbies, student achievement-oriented programs, peer mediation programs [that help young adults learn better communication and problem solving skills]—programs that are fun!"

▫ **Provide Service Learning Experiences that are Tied to the Curriculum:** Community service learning programs are among the promising practices that may help improve school attendance rates, high school completion rates and post secondary attendance of participating students. A good school-based community service learning program should integrate organized community service experiences into the existing curriculum. This link to the

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classroom helps students apply the knowledge and skills gained through the curriculum to benefit their community in a tangible way. Applying new-found knowledge and skills to a project that yields tangible outcomes produces feelings of contribution, mastery and self-worth among youth. All are integral to the fundamental needs and competencies outlined in the youth development model.

6. Cross-Cutting Recommendations

▫ **Develop a Shared Vision for Education at the State and School District Levels:** State and local boards of education should develop a shared understanding of how the academic success of students is strongly linked to their health and mental and social well-being. This will enable them to develop a shared vision of what students need to succeed in school and as productive members of society. This shared vision should facilitate the development and implementation of education reforms that are aligned at the state and local levels. However, the education and well being of students is a shared, societal responsibility. Therefore, state and local boards of education should work with others outside the school system when developing the guiding vision for the education of students in their respective communities. Only then will state and local education policymakers be able to develop the kind of support that will help sustain their efforts over a long period of time.

▫ **Promote Overall Collaboration With, and Coordination Among, Children and Youth Service Providers in the Public and Private Sectors:** There are no easy answers nor magic potions for helping children and youth succeed in school and grow into healthy and productive members of society. Furthermore, schools can not do it alone. Education policymakers and administrators need to work with parents and others if they are to help students succeed and avoid the behaviors that place them at risk for teen pregnancies and other health problems. Therefore, state and local boards of education should adopt policies that foster state and local education stakeholders to work collaboratively with public health and other social and human service providers to develop a seamless network of care and support for students. Furthermore, this can also help maximize the resources available to help students succeed and become productive members of society.

▫ **Support Promising, Evidence-Based Policies and Programs:** We are all familiar with "disease of the month" and simple, trendy approaches to help prevent the risk behaviors that lead to teenage pregnancies, HIV and other STDs, other health problems and academic failure. Members of state and local boards of education at the forum agreed that the education community should support policies and programs that have been evaluated and documented to help prevent the behaviors that lead to teenage pregnancy and other problems. Failure to do this will mean wasted lives, opportunities and resources.

Supporting Your Actions

Quote from Teen Panel member:

"I have a 19 month old baby, and [I have] perfect attendance and good grades. It's real hard to be a teen mother, but I have to do [a good job in school and at home] because I have a little baby who looks up to me and sees what I do and wants to do what I do."

The need for schools to implement and strengthen programs for preventing teen pregnancies and promoting student health has never been stronger. Promising teen pregnancy efforts require that schools join forces with families, communities and the public sector if we are to succeed in reducing and preventing this and other factors that undermine student success in school and in life. There is a diversity of opinions regarding the extent to which schools should be involved. Whatever the type and level of involvement, it is clear that schools need community support and assistance if they are to become effective partners in prevention. NASBE and NSBA are dedicated to helping schools move forward with their teen pregnancy prevention programs and activities. In partnership, both organizations provide state and local policymakers and practitioners:

- Access to useful, up-to-date information about teen pregnancy;
- Sample and model policies addressing the role of schools in teen pregnancy prevention;
- Information on best and promising practices for school-based and /or school-linked prevention strategies; and
- Training and technical assistance on developing and implementing effective policies and practices.

Contact us for more information about how to access information and services.

At NASBE:

Healthy Schools Network Project
National Association of State Boards of Education
277 S. Washington Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone: 703-684-4000
Fax: 703-836-2313
Webpage: www.nasbe.org

At NSBA:

School Health Programs
National School Boards Association
1680 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone: 703-838-6722
Fax: 703-548-5516
Webpage: www.nsba.org

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